CHAPTER 2
IN DAYS OF AOI
(PART 1)

...things in Kyoto start getting lively.

April is when...

DID YOU SEE THE NEWS?!

Mieko-san manages a women's clothing store. She's a frequent customer at Kura.

WHAT NEWS?

ABOUT THE SAIO-DAI, OF COURSE!

MIEKO-SAN!

SHE'S A STUDENT AT A FAMOUS WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY WHOSE FAMILY HAS RUN A TEXTILES BUSINESS FOR GENERATIONS.

THEY PICKED THE PRETTIEST GIRL THIS YEAR!

THE SAIO-DAI... THAT'S AN AOI FESTIVAL THING, RIGHT?

KIYOTAKA-CHAN!

OH? IS THIS ON ME?

...

UM, WHAT EXACTLY IS THE SAIO-DAI?

THE OTHER TWO ARE THE GION FESTIVAL AND THE JIDAI FESTIVAL.

...IS THE STARRING ROLE OF THE AOI FESTIVAL, WHICH IS HELD IN MAY. IT'S ONE OF KYOTO'S THREE GREAT FESTIVALS.

THE SAIO-DAI...

THE AOI FESTIVAL IS EVEN FEATURED IN *THE TALE OF GENJI.*

IT WAS SUCH A LARGE EVENT THAT, DURING THE HEIAN PERIOD, THE WORD "FESTIVAL" REFERRED SIMPLY TO THE AOI FESTIVAL.

When Lady Aoi and Lady Rokujo have a fight with their carriages

WOW...

IT WAS MADE A STATE FESTIVAL DURING THE HEIAN PERIOD,

AND WITH IMPERIAL BACKING, IT BECAME THE ELEGANT FESTIVAL WE KNOW TODAY.

THE OFFICIAL NAME OF THE AOI FESTIVAL IS THE KAMO FESTIVAL.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT IT WAS STARTED BY THE PEOPLE OF KAMO VILLAGE AS WAY TO WARD OFF NATURAL DISASTERS.

PRIESTESSES OF IMPERIAL BLOOD CAME TO BE KNOWN...

AS "SAIO."

WHEN IT BECAME A STATE FESTIVAL, THE GIRL SERVING AS PRIESTESS AT THE TIME WAS EMPEROR SAGA'S BELOVED DAUGHTER, PRINCESS UCHIKO.

ADDITION-ALLY...

NOWADAYS, HOWEVER, AN UNMARRIED WOMAN IS CHOSEN EVERY YEAR...

TO SERVE THE ROLE FOR THE DURATION OF THE FESTIVAL.

SO THEY'RE A STAND-IN FOR THE SAIO.

THAT'S WHY THEY'RE CALLED THE SAIO-DAI!

THE COURTIERS AND OXCARTS IN THE PARADE ALL DECORATED THEMSELVES WITH HOLLYHOCK, AND THE NAME BEGAN TO CATCH ON.

THE REASON THE KAMO FESTIVAL CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE AOI FESTIVAL IS BECAUSE THE ASARUM CAULESCENS (FUTABA-AOI) IS THE CREST OF THE SHIMOGAMO AND KAMIGAMO SHRINES THAT HOLD THE FESTIVAL.

OH, OF COURSE!

THIS IS WHERE YOUR NAME CAME FROM AS WELL, AOI-SAN.

Aoi Cleaning
アオイクリーニング
THE NAME "AOI" IS ALL OVER THAT NEIGHBORHOOD, TO A SHOCKING DEGREE.
WELL, MOST FOLKS IN KYOTO DO ASSOCIATE AOI WITH SHIMOGAMO...
AOI
ENGLI
Aoi Clinic
AL-THOUGH...
I NEVER REALIZED IT BEFORE COMING HERE...
MY LATE GRANDFATHER WAS THE ONE WHO NAMED ME.
HE LIVED NEAR SHIMOGAMO SHRINE, SO I THINK HE FELT AN AFFINITY FOR IT.
IT'S A SIGN OF JUST HOW INFLUENTIAL THE AOI FES-TIVAL IS.
GASP
THE NAME CONVEYS A SENSE OF CHEER AS WELL AS REFINE-MENT.
IT'S WONDERFULLY FITTING FOR YOU.

PLEASE DON'T TEASE ME!

BUT I WAS JUST BEING HONEST WITH YOU.

IT ISN'T PUBLICIZED, BUT SOME SAY THE SHRINES PUT OUT FEELERS.

OTHERS SAY THAT THOSE WHO TEACH ARTS SUCH AS TEA CEREMONY AND FLOWER ARRANGING...

SOLICIT FOR THEIR STUDENTS.

Darn it...

SO, HOW IS THE SAIO-DAI CHOSEN?

AOI-SAN.

TEA CEREMONY AND... FLOWER ARRANGING?

PAT

BECOMIN' THE SAIO-DAI AIN'T LIKE SOME PAGEANT.

YOU CAN'T GET IT JUST BY BEIN' SMART.

WISDOM, GRACE, SOCIAL STANDING...

ONLY A YOUNG WOMAN FROM A VENERABLE FAMILY LINE WHO HAS ALL OF THOSE QUALITIES CAN BE THE SAIO-DAI.

BEIN' THE SAIO-DAI IS THE GREATEST HONOR A KYOTO GIRL CAN ACHIEVE.

THE SAIO-DAI, HUH...

IT'S OUT OF REACH FOR A COMMONER LIKE ME...

BUT I BET SHE'S WONDERFUL.

R—RING

ALL DONE CLEANING FOR THE DAY.

NOW I JUST...

HEY THERE. IS KIYOTAKA IN?

YOU FOND OF ANTIQUES?

WHAT? OH, I...

W-WELCOME.

HOLMES-SAN IS IN THE BACK ROOM...

WELL, AREN'T YOU A CHARMER!

WHO IS HE?

SWISH

WHAAAT?!

WHY DON'T WE GET COFFEE SOMETIME?

I COULD GIVE YOU A FEW LESSONS.

...OWNER?

WOULD YOU KINDLY NOT FLIRT WITH THE PART-TIMER THE MINUTE YOU GET HOME...

AW, KIYOTAKA, SO YOU ARE HERE.

I'VE BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME.

,in the back

OWNER?!

Then this man is Holmes-san's grandfather ...

The state-licensed appraiser Yagashira Seiji-san?!

HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HIM AT ALL!

WHY WOULD I?

I'D HEARD YOU'D HIRED A PART-TIMER,

BUT YOU NEVER TOLD ME SHE WAS SO PRETTY.

LOOK AT HOW YOU BEHAVED THE MINUTE YOU SAW HER.

YOU REALLY NEVER CHANGE.

HE'S VERY... IMPRESSIVE...

YOU BROUGHT THE PEOPLE WAITING OUTSIDE, RIGHT?

JUST LET THEM IN ALREADY.

SO, WHAT TROUBLE ARE YOU BRINGING ME THIS TIME?

THAT'S MY GRANDSON. YOU CATCH ON QUICK.

TROUBLE?

R—
RING

THANK YOU FOR HAVING US.

WOW...

THEY'RE SO ELEGANT...

STEP RIGHT THIS WAY.

AREN'T YOU... MASHIRO-SAN?

MIYASHITA-SAN...?

Closed

IT'S ACTUALLY REALLY AWKWARD!

MUST BE NICE HAVIN' A FRIEND AROUND.

WE JUST RECOGNIZED EACH OTHER. THAT'S ALL.

JUST ACQUAIN-TANCES, REALLY...

SO YOU TWO ARE FRIENDS?

MUST BE DESTINY.

THE TRUTH IS, MIYASHITA-SAN HERE'S GOTTEN MIXED UP IN SOME TROUBLE.

I CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT IT.

MY APOLOGIES, AOI-SAN.

I AM THE MATRIARCH OF MIYASHITA TEXTILES.

AND MY YOUNGEST, KAORI.

THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, SAORI.

HUH? W-WHAT?

SO YOU'RE THE HEAD OF MIYASHITA TEXTILES?

ALLOW ME TO OFFER MY CONGRATULA-TIONS.

"SHE'S A STUDENT AT A FAMOUS WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY WHOSE FAMILY HAS RUN A TEXTILES BUSINESS FOR GENERATIONS."

The Saio-dai...

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN MY DREAM TO HAVE A DAUGHTER BE THE SAIO-DAI...

OH, MUCH OBLIGED.

IT REALLY IS SUCH AN HONOR...

GASP

Then Saori-san is...

This year's Saio-dai?!

NOBODY WANTS TO BUY EXPENSIVE KIMONOS ANYMORE.

AND WE FAILED BIGTIME TRYIN' TO OPEN A BRANCH IN ROPPONGI.

KAORI!

BUT THEY STILL...

YEAH, IT'S OLD.

MIYASHITA TEXTILES IN NISHIJIN IS A SHOP WITH A THREE-HUNDRED-YEAR LINEAGE.

HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED IN REGARDS TO SAORI-SAN BEING CHOSEN AS SAIO-DAI?

THE TRUTH IS...

WE RECEIVED THIS.

A LETTER?

LET ME TAKE A LOOK.

お前は 斎王代に 相応しく ない 辞退 今すぐ しろ

You're unfit to be the Saio-dai
Quit at once

表明し ろ 辞退

Quit already.
No one likes you.

早く 辞退 しろ

目障り だ

WHO... WOULD DO THIS?

目障り

No one likes you

しろ

Quit at once.

辞退

I WENT TO FLOWER ARRANGING PRACTICE AFTER CLASS...

AND WHEN I GOT HOME THAT DAY, I DISCOVERED AN UNFAMILIAR ENVELOPE IN MY BAG.

THE FIRST LETTER ARRIVED A WEEK AGO.

WHEN AND HOW DID YOU RECEIVE THEM?

I OPENED IT, AND INSIDE WAS THAT LETTER.

I'M SORRY. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW IT GOT THERE...

YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT, BUT SISSY'S PRETTY OBLIVIOUS.

...

THEN THREE DAYS AGO, THE SECOND LETTER ARRIVED...

SO WE DECIDED IT WAS JUST A MALICIOUS PRANK OR AN EXPRESSION OF JEALOUSY

AT FIRST, I JUST FELT SO SICK TO MY STOMACH...

BUT NOTHING ELSE HAPPENED.

CORRECT

JUST AS IT IS? WITH NO ENVELOPE?

SO I ASKED THAT MY HUSBAND DISCUSS THINGS WITH SEIJI-SAN...

AND HERE WE ARE.

NORMALLY, WE WOULD'VE TAKEN IT TO THE AUTHORITIES...

BUT WE DIDN'T WANT TO CAUSE TROUBLE BEFORE THE BIG FESTIVAL.

MY DAUGHTER DIDN'T WANT TO GET OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY, EITHER

HE SAID THAT HIS GRANDSON, KIYOTAKA-KUN, IS KNOWN AS THE "HOLMES OF KYOTO."

For heaven's sake...

BUT HAVING HEARD THE STORY,

I WILL ATTEMPT TO HELP YOU IN ANY WAY I CAN.

THE NICKNAME "HOLMES" IS MERELY DERIVED FROM MY LAST NAME, YAGA-SHIRA...

I might a said that, yeah.

...!

WOULD I BE CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHO WROTE THESE?

LET US BEGIN, THEN, SAORI-SAN.

H-HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT?

IS THAT TRUE, SAORI?!

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

PROBABLY 'CAUSE YOU'D MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT, LIKE YOU'RE DOIN' NOW.

YOU SEEM RATHER CALM FOR SOMEONE WHO'S RECEIVED LETTERS LIKE THIS.

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE THINKING, "AH, MAYBE IT'S THEM."

IS IT JUST ME... OR IS SHE ACTING KIND OF STILTED?

KAWASE KEIKO AND MIKAMI YUKO...

THEY WERE MY FRIENDS IN HIGH SCHOOL.

SAORI-SAN.

I WON'T ASSUME THEY'RE THE CULPRIT JUST BECAUSE YOU GIVE ME THEIR NAME.

THOSE TWO AGAIN?!

...

SHH

I DON'T KNOW WHY.

BUT AT SOME POINT, THEY STARTED LEAVING ME OUT OF EVERYTHING.

OUR FAMILIES WERE CLOSE, SO WE BECAME FAST FRIENDS.

KEIKO'S FAMILY RUNS A TRADITIONAL RESTAURANT, AND YUKO'S A TRADITIONAL INN.

DURING HIGH SCHOOL, WE WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER...

AND THINGS HAVE ONLY GOTTEN WORSE...

SINCE YOU WERE CHOSEN TO BE THE SAIO-DAI, HAVEN'T THEY?

NOD

BUT WE GO TO THE SAME FLOWER ARRANGING CLASS AND THE SAME UNIVERSITY.

I CAN'T REALLY GET AWAY FROM THEM...

AND THEN...

I TOLD MY FLOWER ARRANGEMENT TEACHER FIRST.

WHEN I WAS CHOSEN TO BE SAIO-DAI...

"IT'S MIYASHITA SAORI-SAN!"

"AMAZING NEWS, EVERY-ONE!"

"SOMEONE FROM OUR CLASS HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO BE THE SAIO-DAI!"

THAT'S AWFUL!

THEY'RE CLEARLY JUST JEALOUS!

MAYBE THEY WERE BOTH HOPING TO BE CHOSEN...

MAYBE THEY THOUGHT I WAS BRAGGING...

A WOMAN'S ENVY IS A TERRIFYING THING...

BUT EVER SINCE THEN, THEY'VE BEEN SO RUDE TO ME.

MIGHT I SPEAK TO THEM MYSELF?

NO.

I WAS THINKING I'D PRETEND YOU AND I NEVER MET,

AND FIND A WAY TO BRING IT UP WITH THEM CASUALLY.

OH... IN THAT CASE...

ARE...

ARE YOU GOING TO ASK THEM ABOUT THIS DIRECTLY?

I SEE...

IF THEY FIND OUT SHE SUSPECTS THEM OF SENDING THE THREATENING LETTERS...

THEY MIGHT START TREATING HER EVEN WORSE.

IN THAT CASE, THEIR FLOWER ARRANGEMENT CLASS WILL BE HOLDING AN EXHIBITION NEXT WEEK.

ALL THE STUDENTS'LL BE THERE.

IT CAN BE SCARY TO LEARN THE TRUTH.

BESIDES...

EVEN IF YOU DO SUSPECT SOME-ONE...

THAT SOUNDS PERFECT.

I'LL BE SURE TO STOP BY.

The girls are waitin' for me!

BY THE WAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THEM HERE?

HE LEFT IT ALL TO ME AND WENT OFF TO PONTOCHO.

Even though I wanted to ask him something...

THREATENING LETTERS CAN BE QUITE FRIGHTEN-ING...

THE OWNER SURE IS... ENTHUSIASTIC.

HE'S DEFINITELY AMAZING, AND I DO RESPECT HIM, BUT...

WE CALL IT SELFISH!

IT'S HIS PERSONALITY THAT'S THE PROBLEM.

I WISH HE'D SHOW SOME EMPATHY FOR THE PEOPLE HE USES SOMETIMES.

...

BUT I'VE BEEN VISITING MY GRANDFATHER'S PLACE OF WORK FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.

SO I GUESS IT NEVER REALLY FELT THAT WAY TO ME.

I SUPPOSE HE WAS, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT.

UM...

WAS THE OWNER THE ONE WHO TAUGHT YOU APPRAISAL, HOLMES-SAN?

THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT, ACTUALLY.

HUH?

BUT HOLMES-SAN, AREN'T YOU A GRADUATE STUDENT THERE?

AND THE WAY HE DRAGGED ME ALL OVER THE PLACE WAS THE REASON THAT I COULDN'T GET IN TO KYOTO UNIVERSITY.

I ONLY TRANSFERRED TO KYOTO UNIVERSITY LATER.

IT WAS KYOTO PREFECTURAL UNIVERSITY THAT I ENROLLED IN ORIGINALLY.

IT'S MUCH EASIER TO GET IN AS A GRADUATE STUDENT.

NO, NO! NOT AT ALL!

...DO YOU FIND THAT DISHONEST?

TAKING A ROUNDABOUT PATH BUT STILL REACHING THE FINAL GOAL IS ACTUALLY VERY HOLMES-SAN-LIKE...

THAT YOU GRADUATED FROM KYOTO UNIVERSITY?

BUT WHEN IT'S ALL SAID AND DONE, I STILL GET TO SAY ON MY RÉSUMÉ...

MY FATHER AND GRANDFATHER BOTH WENT TO KYOTO UNIVERSITY, SO I ALSO WANTED TO GO THERE.

YOU WENT TO KYOTO UNIVERSITY TOO, MANAGER?

WHAT? OH, YES...

UEDA-SAN AND MY FATHER WERE IN THE SAME CLASS.

WOW!

IT'S NOT THAT REMARKABLE...

BESIDES, I WASN'T CUT OUT FOR APPRAISING.

...

BY THE WAY, AOI-SAN...

WOULD YOU COME TO THE FLOWER SHOW WITH ME?

I THINK THAT A MAN ATTENDING ALONE WOULD BE CONSPICUOUS.

OH, SURE!

IT'S IN HOTEL OKURA, RIGHT?

FRENCH TOAST?!

THERE'S A CAFE THERE THAT SERVES THE BEST FRENCH TOAST.

WE COULD STOP BY AFTER-WARD.

ACTUALLY...

THIS RATHER MAKES IT SOUND LIKE I'M HITTING ON YOU.

BLUUUSH

YOU REALLY ARE NASTY...

I'M ONLY KIDDING.

I HAVE NO SINISTER INTENTIONS, SO PLEASE RELAX.

NOT YOU! TOO, MANAGER!

NO, I WASN'T THINKING THAT, AOI-SAN!

SNICKER

SNICKER

IT'S JUST...

YOU TWO ARE EXACTLY LIKE A DETECTIVE AND HIS ASSISTANT.

NOT YOU TOO, DAD...

I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BEING A DETECTIVE.

BUT I WOULDN'T MIND HAVING AOI-SAN AS MY ASSISTANT.

Again?!

I GOT A LITTLE EXCITED THERE...

HE'S RIGHT.

AND EVEN WORSE THAN THAT...

EVEN IF IT IS JUST A PRANK,

IT'S SCARY TO HAVE SOMEONE THREATENING YOU.

EITHER WAY, PLEASE JUST RESOLVE THIS QUICKLY.

IT COULD BE COMING FROM SOMEONE SHE THOUGHT OF AS A FRIEND.

OH?

BUT I BELIEVE I CAN SOLVE THIS IN NO TIME.

HMM... THAT'S TRUE.

NOT JUST YET.

BUT I HAVE A FEW THEORIES.

HOLMES-SAN, YOU ALREADY KNOW WHO DID IT?!

AND TO HELP ME CONFIRM THEM...

I'LL BE COUNTING ON YOU AT THE EXHIBITION, MY ASSISTANT.

...HUH?

CHAPTER 2
END

KYOTO NOTES

RECOMMENDED SOUVENIR: RYOKUJUAN KIYOMIZU KONPEITO

They make the konpeito slowly over time, so it's used as a metaphor for building a family, and often used in celebrations!

Holmes at

京都寺町三条のホームズ

Kyoto Teramachi Sanjo